



# SAFE Schools

## NEWSLETTER



### Free Anti-Bullying Guide Available On-line

The free guide, "Bullying in Schools," by Rana Sampson, provides anti-bullying information that administrators can distribute to their staff. Sponsored by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), Department of Justice, the guide offers insight on topics such as:

- ◆ Extent of Bullying;
- ◆ Reluctance To Report; and
- ◆ Consequences of Bullying.

For a complete copy of "Bullying in Schools," go to the COPS website at: [www.cops.usdoj.gov/mime.open.pdf?Item=272](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/mime.open.pdf?Item=272). ■

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### Suicide Prevention Kits Sent to DoDEA Schools

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people age 15 to 24. According to the Jason Foundation, in 2000 over three million U.S. teens seriously considered suicide. Of that number, over one million actually attempted suicide. The Jason Foundation helps schools prevent suicide by educating youth about this problem and increasing awareness of this "silent epidemic."

The Jason Foundation was formed by Clark Flatt two months after his teenage son, Jason, committed suicide. The program is designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills and strategies that will enable them to help a friend (or themselves) if they are depressed or considering self-harm. Through the five 50-minute lessons, students learn about:

- ◆ Current statistics and suicide myths;
- ◆ Warning signs associated with suicidal thoughts; and
- ◆ Resources available to assist depressed or suicidal youth.



The DoDEA Office of Safety and Security, through DynCorp, has arranged for a copy of this program to be donated to each DoDEA middle and high school. Please share your thoughts on this program with us by sending an e-mail to: [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com).

For additional information about the Jason Foundation visit: [www.jasonfoundation.com](http://www.jasonfoundation.com). For further information about suicide prevention see the position statement on suicide from the National Association of School Nurses at: [www.nasn.org/briefs/2000briefmental.htm](http://www.nasn.org/briefs/2000briefmental.htm). For additional information visit: the American Association of Suicidology [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org); the National Association of School Psychologists [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org); the American Psychiatric Association [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org); or Suicide Awareness - Voices of Education [www.save.org](http://www.save.org). ■

## Newsletter Index On-line

Thank you for requesting an index to the DoDEA Safe Schools Newsletters! The newsletter index will soon be available on the DoDEA website where you currently access the Safe Schools Newsletters ([www.dodea.edu/schools/newsletters](http://www.dodea.edu/schools/newsletters)). This tool will allow users to search articles through four different venues:

- ◆ **Date of Article** – Know the exact volume and issue of the Safe Schools Newsletter you're looking for? Go straight to it using a convenient list on the main page of the newsletter website.
- ◆ **Newsletter Table of Contents** – Browsing through old newsletters? This section allows you to search for articles by perusing the monthly table of contents from Safe Schools Newsletters.
- ◆ **Subject Category** – Looking for articles relating to a specific topic? Scroll through an alphabetized list of categories dealing with Safe Schools planning. The list goes from A to Z and includes topics such as anti-bullying and violence prevention.
- ◆ **Handbook Table of Contents** – Looking for an article that relates to a particular section of the Safe Schools Handbook? Use this option to find articles that relate directly to topics discussed in the handbook.

During the summer, the index will be updated to incorporate the articles from the previous school year. Please let us know how you like it by sending an e-mail to [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■

**DoDEA Safe Schools Program Managers**  
Ed Englehardt, Rose Chunik

**Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff**  
Bob Michela, Jennifer Bloom, Brian McKeon, Keith Shaver

This is an unofficial publication produced by DynCorp, Inc. on behalf of the Department of Defense Education Activity Office of Safety and Security. The material herein is presented for informational purposes and does not constitute official policy of the Department of Defense. All comments and questions should be directed to Bob Michela at: [rmichela@csc.com](mailto:rmichela@csc.com).

## Share LIFE

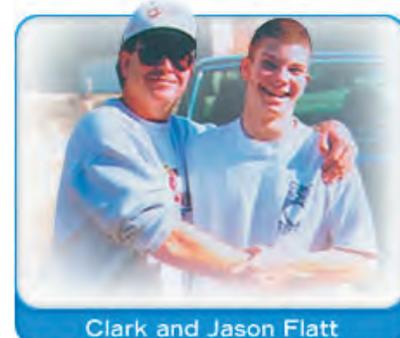
The Jason Foundation uses the acronym LIFE to teach students how to communicate with troubled friends and encourage them to seek help. LIFE stands for:

- ▶ **Listen.**
- ▶ **Insist on honesty.**
- ▶ **Feelings – share them.**
- ▶ **Extend a helping hand.**

Students do not attempt to counsel a troubled friend by themselves. Instead, they steer friends into the arms and ears of adults, such as school psychologists and counselors trained in suicide prevention and intervention. ■



Student Action: Above, Jason Foundation students make a public service announcement to increase awareness about suicide.



Clark and Jason Flatt

## Summertime Exercises

Many administrators find it difficult to practice their Incident Response Plan during the school year. However, veterans of crisis situations state that the best way to prepare to respond effectively to a crisis is to:

1. Provide opportunities for administrators to practice making decisions in a simulated incident; and
2. Practice implementing emergency response procedures. In emergency situations we perform the way we practice.

Summertime affords an opportunity to prepare exercises that accomplish both objectives. A variety of exercises allow staff to gain experience in simulated incidents and familiarize themselves with response procedures.

- ◆ **Orientations** provide staff with the “big picture” background on how the school will respond to an incident. Orientations also familiarize staff with their duties before they need to implement the procedures.
- ◆ **Path Games** and **Table Top Exercises** allow staff to practice making decisions during a postulated crisis scenario. Administrators think through how they would respond before they are placed in a crisis situation.

The final three options involve implementing the established Incident Response Procedures.

- ◆ **Protective Action Drills** consist of practicing lockdown, shelter-in-place, take cover and evacuation procedures. Administrators can initiate and evaluate protective actions just as they have practiced fire drill evacuations for years.
- ◆ **Partial Response Exercises** and **Full-Scale Exercises** incorporate responses from emergency responders and require extensive coordination with installation officials.

Seasoned administrators have commented that they cannot plan for every conceivable scenario, but practicing decision-making prepares them to adjust to whatever circumstances they confront. Two critical things to remember during a decision making exercise include:

1. Take time to identify the threat, then decide on an appropriate protective action.
2. Don't move toward the threat. Keep the threat from harming students.

These guidelines are applicable whether the threat is a violent intruder requiring a lockdown, an aerosol cloud of hazardous agents requiring the school to shelter-in-place, an approaching storm requiring the students to take cover, or a bomb threat requiring an evacuation.

The week before classes convene for the 2005-2006 school year provides an opportunity to familiarize your staff with your Incident Response Procedures, and complete one exercise before the students arrive. For further information on any of these exercises, or for assistance planning your drills, contact the Safe Schools Program at: [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■

## Protective Action Question of the Month



One of the most challenging aspects of lockdowns is how to deal with students caught in the halls or rest rooms. Do you have a tactic that works? Please share it so we can include it in a future newsletter for the benefit of other administrators. E-mail your idea to: [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■





## Easing School Transitions

DoDEA students team with advisors and school liaison officers to smooth the transition for students entering their school. The stress of frequently changing schools can exacerbate existing psychological pressures on students and lead to discipline problems or violence. According to the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), “children of military personnel sometimes move six to nine times during their school years.” MCEC’s “Student-to-Student” initiative teaches students how to welcome new arrivals, help them make friends, and explain the rules.

The initiative is student led. Teams from participating schools attend the training with their advisors and then present that training at their own school. The three research-based modules include:

- ◆ **Academics: Requirements, Process, Access** – Students learn how to describe their school’s test assessments, progress reporting and opportunities for enrichment.
- ◆ **Relationships: Acceptance, Attributes, Friendships** – Youth practice welcoming newcomers, and familiarizing them with the groups and organizations at school.
- ◆ **Finding the Way: Attention, Orientation and Appreciation** – Participants learn how to describe the school culture, rules, and policies.

Student leaders participating in the program receive training and resources to help them develop lesson plans tailored to their schools. Presenters hone their organization and communication skills while providing valuable information to incoming students.

Student-to-student initiatives benefit the entire school:

- ◆ Peer-to-peer communication helps newcomers make friends more quickly and understand how their new school “does business.”
- ◆ Current students develop a stronger commitment to their school.
- ◆ Student leadership empowers youth and develops responsible citizens.

DoDEA counselors have been trained through the Transition Counselor Institutes and MCEC. Also, the military services provide transition specialists to assist schools, students and families.

For additional information on the Student-to-Student initiative, visit the Military Child Education Coalition website at: [www.militarychild.org/S2S.asp](http://www.militarychild.org/S2S.asp). For additional information to assist transitioning students, visit these sites sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense: Military Teens on the Move at [www.dod.mil/mtom/index\\_t.htm](http://www.dod.mil/mtom/index_t.htm) or MCEC’s site at [www.militarychild.org](http://www.militarychild.org). ■



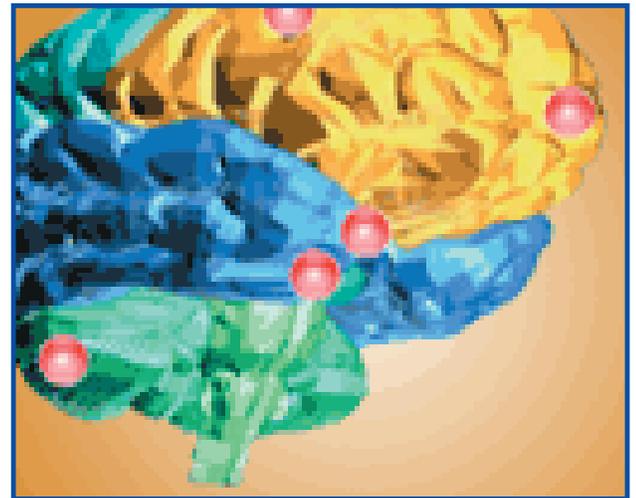
## White House Educates Parents About Marijuana

In mid-April, The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign launched a new print ad campaign to provide parents with scientific facts about the risks of marijuana use. The campaign's theme, "Facts for Parents," was created in response to research which showed that most parents



feel they don't have enough compelling facts to address marijuana use with their teens. Although the campaign is primarily targeted at parents, the ads, appearing in major U.S. newspapers through mid-September, contain data that schools and youth organizations can use to illustrate how harmful marijuana is for teenagers. According to the campaign:

- ◆ Kids who are regular marijuana users often have shortened attention spans, decreased energy and ambition, lack of judgment, high distractibility, and an impaired ability to communicate and relate to others – a set of symptoms called “a motivational syndrome” by psychologists.
- ◆ Regular marijuana use can lead to breathing problems and greater exposure to cancerous chemicals than from tobacco. In fact, one marijuana cigarette can deliver four times as much cancer-causing tar as one tobacco cigarette.
- ◆ Marijuana today is much stronger than it was 20 years ago. It contains twice the concentration of THC, the chemical that affects the brain.



Resources from the Campaign include a **Marijuana and Health Risk Quiz** – This is an interactive tool to help parents learn about the health risks associated with marijuana use. The quiz provides parents with facts that enable them to have informed and ongoing discussions with their children and teens about the dangers of marijuana at: [www.theantidrug.com/drug\\_info/drug\\_info\\_truth\\_mj.asp](http://www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/drug_info_truth_mj.asp). For more information about the effects

of marijuana use, as well as advice for “adult influencers” on keeping kids drug-free, visit the ONDCP's Media Campaign website at: [www.TheAntiDrug.com](http://www.TheAntiDrug.com). ■



## As a Tank Rolls Up

By Dr. Gloria Yokley, Assistant Principal,  
Vilseck Elementary School  
Department of Defense Dependents Schools  
–Europe, Bavaria District, Germany.

As a tank from 1st Battalion, 63 Armor, rolls up to Vilseck Elementary School in Germany, one realizes that this is not an ordinary school. A sign displayed on the tank reads: “It ‘tanks’ a lot of books to be a Red Hot Reader,” the slogan for the month’s reading initiative. The tank symbolizes a “welcome back” to soldiers returning from Iraq and the mutual support of the military, families and Vilseck Elementary School staff.

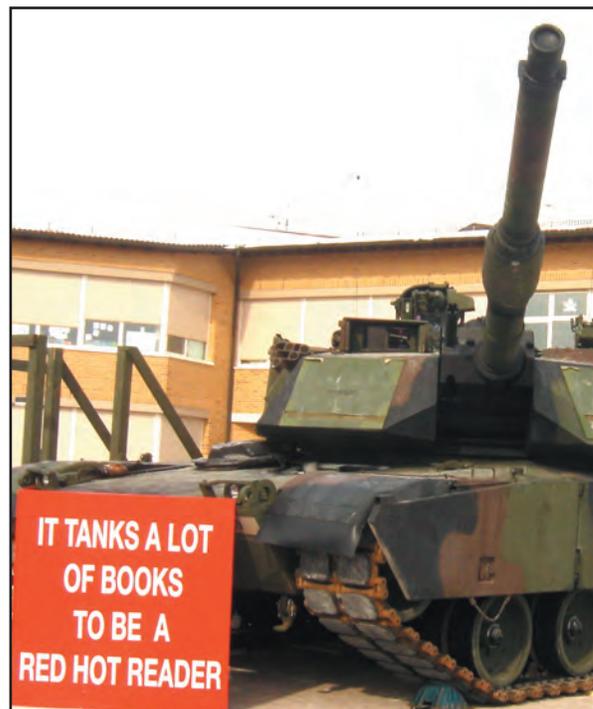


The school partnership with the military fosters a student-family-school extended relationship. Close to half of our students have military sponsors (parents) deployed to Iraq for 12 months, with many parents returning to Iraq for a second tour of 12 months.

Observers ask us how our school of 750 pupils has relatively few discipline problems and orderly halls. The answer – our staff. They take a proactive approach to foster an “extended family” relationship with each student.

## Staff Learn About Students

Through collaborative sessions at the beginning of the school year, staff reached consensus that the best way to “anchor students through the trauma of war” was to commit to know each child better than they would under normal circumstances. Teachers tried to find out what makes each student unique – their interests, fears, goals – to establish a sincere, positive, caring and unique bond with them. Staff adopting a compassionate relationship with each child has been, for us, a winning strategy.



As many of the parents were deployed to Iraq, the boundaries of school and family became symbolically and, in many ways, literally, more integrated. Many colleagues saw our school as a very large family of 835 students and staff.

Centering on all aspects of the child to include student adjustment, as well as providing both physical and emotional safety, was central to this effort. We made certain there were no disenfranchised or marginal groups, or individuals targeted by rumors, gossip, teasing, name-calling, note writing, threats or bullying. All of these issues were rapidly addressed and quickly squelched on the spot. It became evident to the students that the school had their best interests at heart. We worked together to make a wholesome environment.

## As a Tank Rolls Up (Continued)

### Character Counts

At Vilseck we use the Character Counts Program to enhance positive character attributes and strengthen self-monitoring of interpersonal skills through on-the-spot training. Many mornings as students waited at outside lineup, the assistant principal initiated a “mind set” discussion and reflection time and asked the students to visualize a great academic day that included pleasant interactions with their classmates. As weeks passed, students seemed empowered by organizing their day mentally, by making the right choices, prior to entering the building. As a result of this new mind set and student interaction process, students demonstrated greater maturity and responsibility.

What made students kinder and more accepting of one another? Perhaps it was the example we used of the “parents deployed” who were helping to establish a “free and viable” nation for Iraq. We suggested that this was how the students could play “their part” on the home front. Perhaps it was “respect for all” which was being modeled through the Character Counts Program, and the staff’s efforts to build meaningful relationships with students.

### Moviemakers Club

Teachers tapped into areas where good citizenship and team-building could be facilitated. For example, the Moviemakers Club was an instant hit that included projects such as filming holiday greetings to send to soldiers in the battlefields. Making movies of school events and performances gave students hope that they would have the opportunity to share these “missed moments” with their parents when they returned home. Is it any wonder Vilseck Elementary School has experienced fewer discipline problems?



### New Perspective

A large majority of the students’ parents are gone for a year, and then, after a short break, the mission requires a follow-on tour of another year. Knowing this, teachers saw their students in a somewhat different light. Deployed and non-deployed parents saw the school in a more appreciative light.

Students saw themselves differently. They were helping to keep their family together in a most grown-up and mature way. Many perceptions have changed for the better. Student character growth, academic acceleration, self-monitoring, greater maturity, and wisdom truly did come about. In the face of hard struggles, the greater person emerges, leaving the former person behind, as if really growing out of, and shedding the old skin.

Our students stood up to the new challenge in the way they knew their deployed parents would expect. Parents and teachers had very high expectations of every student and expressed their confidence in the students. What happened? It was a synthesis of elements, which formed an extremely positive synergy. Love for humankind in all its forms of diversity and uniqueness really does make the difference we seek. ■